

# Women scientists make their mark

Jalelah Abu Baker

It took Dr Wan Yue four tries before she secured one of the two L'Oréal Singapore For Women In Science National Fellowships this year.

Dr Wan, a senior research scientist from the Agency for Science, Technology and Research's Genome Institute of Singapore, seeks to develop treatment against infectious diseases like dengue and Zika by studying nuclear acids in cells.

Explaining why she refused to give up even after three failed attempts, the 33-year-old said: "I do believe that resilience is one of the key determinants in science. Science fails so much, so without resilience and perseverance, it is difficult to get through all the failures."

Dr Wan, who is married with two young children, said that the lack of women at the top levels of science is an issue close to her heart.

"We need to increase our support for women in every single stage of their development and their career," she said, adding that there is

a cultural notion that women need to give up their aspirations to take on more domestic roles.

The other fellowship recipient is Assistant Professor Shao Huilin, from the National University of Singapore's Department of Biomedical Engineering.

She is working on creating biosensors to look at circulating biomarkers in fluids like blood and urine, in order to detect and monitor disease. This would address the need for large samples and intensive processing.

Prof Shao hopes that the technology will be ready to be marketed in five to 10 years.

Dr Wan Yue and Prof Shao were picked from 42 applicants for the award which is aimed at recognizing and rewarding talented women in the field of science.

Every year, two fellowships, which each come with a \$30,000 cash prize, are awarded in the fields of life science and physical and engineering science.

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Scientists Shao Huilin (far left) and Wan Yue have been lauded for their research, with Dr Wan calling for more support for women in the field of science. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN